

## Report for Information

<b>Report to</b>	Executive 22 July 2009
<b>Report of</b>	Director of Transformation
<b>Subject</b>	Corporate Annual Report 2008/09

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Item  
**5**

### Purpose

To provide a summary of the City Councils achievements during 2008/09, and outstanding challenges, and timetable for the preparation of a new Corporate Plan for the 2009-2011 period.

### Recommendations

To note the report.

### Financial Consequences

The financial consequences of this report are nil. However, it is likely that the revision of the corporate plan will need to take account of the Council's emerging improvement and efficiency programme. This programme will need to generate a range of proposals to make changes to both the Council's policy and financial frameworks. Any such proposed changes will therefore need to be reported to the appropriate member groups for consideration and approval.

### Risk Assessment

A new corporate plan will need to cover the 2009-2011 period, which is expected to be a challenging period in terms of finances. The emerging improvement and efficiency programme will be comprehensive, and the outcomes could possibly affect all of the council's services. As part of the normal project methodology, each workstream project will carry out a risk assessment to evaluate the potential impact of any proposed policy, financial or service changes and this assessment will be included in relevant reports to members.

### Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Aiming for excellence – ensuring the Council is efficient in its use of resources, is effective in delivering its plans, is a good employer and communicates effectively with its customers, staff and partners".

**Executive Member:** Councillor Waters - Corporate Resources and Governance

**Wards:** All

**Contact Officers**

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## **Report**

### **Background**

1. There can be no doubt that 2008/09 was a very tough year for Norwich City Council, and local government in general.
2. In particular the recession has provided the major challenge. It has significantly reduced our income flows (eg reduced interest from investments, reduced income from planning and other fees etc), at the same time as a dramatic increase in demand for particular services (eg benefits, housing and other community support).
3. The City Council has therefore had to respond by increasing efficiency in order to maintain expenditure on key front-line services. During the 2008/09 year we have already identified a total of approximately £4m of efficiency savings. As a result of the economic downturn, and the resulting impact on our income levels, we now need to find an additional £8m+ savings to balance the budget for next year.
4. During such difficult times, local people often look to the Council to provide additional support, and to stimulate opportunities for recovery. Despite growing pressure on limited resources, the City Council has therefore continued to deliver a range of vital services, and has achieved a number of significant improvements during the year. This report aims to highlight some of the key successes, and those areas where we have not made progress and which we need to refocus on in the future.

### **Service achievements in 2008/09**

5. The City Council provides around 100 different services for nearly 130,000 local people, thousands of local business, as well as many thousands of visitors, workers and students, for an average Council Tax cost of £150.18 per household per year in the City Council area (NB most households in the city are in Band A or B). This amount equates to less than £3 per household per week – less than the cost of a two trip bus ticket. For this, local people receive a wide range of vital services including waste collection, housing, environmental health, community wardens, car parks, street cleaning, parks and play areas.
6. Every year the Council is required to identify at least 3% efficiency savings, which are then re-invested back into front-line service delivery. We also aim to continuously improve the services that we provide, and to do more with less. Despite 2008/09 being a tough year, the City Council has once again secured a wide range of significant improvements - a list of service achievements are set out in Annex A. It is important to note that the vast majority of these are “above and beyond” normal service delivery, and represent continuous improvements achieved within available resources. This reflects the recent result of our staff survey which showed that 91% of staff were prepared to “go the extra mile” at work.
7. Some of the most significant achievements are set out below. It is important

that these particular achievements are recognised and applauded:

#### Strong and prosperous city

- Start of work on St Anne's Wharf bridge
- Securing at least £8m investment from the Homes & Communities Agency into the city, to be used for new affordable homes and infrastructure projects
- Supported 2742 people to gain better skills, employment or start a business, helped 223 new businesses start up and supported 1244 existing businesses
- A range of physical improvements such as St George's Street, and various Britain in Bloom awards
- A continued reduction in road accidents in the city area

#### Safe and healthy neighbourhoods

- Recycling rates now up to 34%
- Cleaner streets – 91% of streets judged to be clean (NI195)
- Safer neighbourhoods – 9% reduction in crime and reduced perception of anti-social behaviour. Norwich was recently identified as the 2<sup>nd</sup> safest city in the country for burglary.
- A wide range of new and improved play and recreation facilities
- Achieved the Decent Homes standard for council owned homes
- National recognition for our Food Safety "Scores on the Doors" scheme

#### Opportunity for all

- Set up a specific financial inclusion project to respond to the recession
- Setup an Older People's Commission to champion the rights of older people
- A range of actions to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce energy costs
- Achieved Level 2 of the Equalities Standard

#### Aiming for Excellence

- Achieved £4m of efficiency savings, to be re-invested back into front-line service delivery
- Clean bill of health on our financial accounts, and achieved Level 2 on our "Use of resources" score.

#### **Areas for improvement**

8. There are also a number of outstanding areas where improvements are needed. Some of these have been highlighted as part of external inspections (eg by the Audit Commission). The main areas for improvement include:
  - Housing – our Housing Management inspection highlighted the need for rapid improvement in a range of areas including customer responsiveness, and turnaround of vacant properties (voids)
  - Planning – although performance has improved it remains below par against the targets for the time taken to consider planning applications.
9. In both these cases we have now established Improvement Boards to tackle the issues and drive forward efficiencies and improvements. Both Boards include external representatives to provide challenge to our plans, and to bring

alternative views from best practise elsewhere.

## **Customer opinion – the place survey**

10. During the 2008/09 year, as part of a national initiative, we carried a survey of public opinion about Norwich as a place to live, and satisfaction with key service areas. The results have just been published. Some of the headline positive results for Norwich are as follows:

- Overall satisfaction with the city council is slightly above the national average (46% compared to 45%)
- Satisfaction with doorstep recycling has increased from 57% to 68%
- Satisfaction with parks and open spaces is well above the national average (74.6% compared to 68.5%)
- % of people who have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the past 12 months is good (Norwich 14.6%; nearest neighbours 12.7%)
- % of people who agree that they can influence decisions in their local area is good (Norwich 33.9%; nearest neighbours 28.5%)
- Satisfaction with museums/ galleries is high - Norwich 62.8%, neighbours 53.0%, England 41.5%
- Satisfaction with theatres/ concert halls is high - Norwich 67.6%, neighbours 56.9%, England 43.2%.

11. But there are also areas where improvement is needed:

- % of people who feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood - we had the lowest score amongst the nearest neighbours for this (Norwich 47.1%, Norfolk average 51.4%, England 58.7%)
- A low percentage of people feel informed about what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency
- An increase in the % of people who think that drunk and rowdy behaviour is a problem in their local area
- % of people who would say that they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services in the last year is lower in Norwich at 68.1%, than both our neighbours 71.9%, and England overall 72.4%.

12. The detailed results were only received at the end of June 2009, and so are only being analysed now, but we will need to make sure that evidence is used to help design our future services, and make sure that they are tailored to meet the concerns and demands of local people. This will be built into our future plans (see next section of this report).

## **Looking forward – planning for the 2009-2011 period**

13. If 2008/09 has been a difficult year, then the 2009-2011 period is likely to be even more challenging and uncertain for a number of reasons:

- A General Election before June 2010
- Final decision on unitary status, leading to either:
  - gearing up to a new unitary council – either on an extended greater Norwich boundary, or on the existing boundary, or
  - abolition of Norwich City Council and absorption into a single county unitary council, or
  - no change status quo

- The possibility of a continuing economic recession. Even if things do pick up, then there will be an ongoing need to control public spending in order to pay back huge investments made by national Government.
14. The City Council's difficult financial position has been recognised in our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), although this is being constantly reviewed as the economic situation fluctuates. At present we estimate that the budget gap is around £8m+, and so we have developed a corporate improvement and efficiency programme to deliver at least £8m efficiency savings by April 2010. Savings of this scale (representing approx 15-20% of our controllable General Fund spending) cannot be achieved without a fundamental review of what services the City Council provides, and the way we work. Therefore our plans and priorities for the 2009-2011 period will need to be tempered to fit within the reducing resources that we expect to have at our disposal.
15. This means that we need to review our current Corporate Plan to reflect the new financial reality. In view of the need to make savings as soon as possible, we may also need to review budgets for this year (2009/10) and possibly agree a revised budget for the remainder of this financial year.
16. We are therefore proposing to prepare a new Corporate Plan, and the proposed timetable is as follows:
- July – review priorities
  - August – develop priorities and performance targets
  - 10 September – Scrutiny Committee to pre-scrutinise draft Corporate Plan
  - 16 September – Executive to consider draft Corporate Plan
  - 29 September – Council to approve new Corporate Plan
  - October – possible re-budgeting exercise
  - End October – new service plans completed.

**NORWICH CITY COUNCIL**

**SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS 2008/09**

<b>STRONG AND PROSPEROUS CITY</b>
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Regeneration

- Securing £730K from EEDA and £70K from GNDP to deliver the St Anne's Wharf bridge. Started on site Jan 09 (with completion planned August 09)
- Single Conversation Agreement with HCA which may bring £8M HCA investment into Norwich and the basis of a longer term partnership over 10-15 years to deliver homes, jobs and sustainable communities
- Establishing a new approach for dealing with developer contributions through the planning process in the recession (to allow critical regeneration projects to happen when schemes may be unviable).

Economic Development

- Supported 2742 people to gain better skills, employment or start a business, helped 223 new businesses start up and supported 1244 existing businesses
- Community Learning Mentors helped 326 Norwich people to gain new skills and 63 people benefited from employment support/assistance to get a job.
- Opening of an Enterprise Centre on Guildhall Hill to provide advice, guidance and support to local people thinking of setting up a new business venture, and to existing businesses
- Creation of a new "Norwich Factfile" to help encourage businesses to locate in the city
- Publication of the Greater Norwich Economic Strategy 2009-2014 to drive the economy of Greater Norwich through recession, "bounce back" and into growth
- City centre vacant shops campaign launched to raise awareness and importance of the city as a regional shopping and tourist destination
- Genome Analysis Centre – support for the opening of a world-class national facility for the study and application of genetics in animals, plants and microbes – at Norwich Research Park. This will create jobs and further raise the profile of Norwich as a major centre for health and life sciences.

Planning

- Extensive work on the development of a Joint Core Strategy for the greater Norwich area, which sets out the planning framework for the growth of the city over the next 20 years
- Reduced response times for informal enquiries from 8 weeks to 3 weeks or under in most cases
- Cleared a backlog of outstanding applications without compromising customer service so that the performance indicators for the service will be able to demonstrate significant improvements in the coming months
- Taking forward an Area Action Plan for the Northern City Centre so it can be formally submitted to government. This will provide the impetus for regeneration schemes in this part of the city

- Improvement in performance indicators for "minor" and "other" applications - where performance has improved steadily and now exceeds targets set out in the corporate plan
- Initial work to develop and consult on exciting proposals for a new master plan for the St Stephens area of the city centre

#### Transportation and Landscape

- Winning a Britain in Bloom 2008 Silver Gilt award and Best in Category for Urban Regeneration
- A Silver award from Anglia in Bloom for the works in the Norwich Lanes.
- Positive public feedback for the improvements in St George's Street and the associated open space at St George's Green (88% satisfaction)
- Delivery of Growth Point projects e.g. Grapes Hill bus improvement scheme which has successfully reduced delays to buses
- Improved road safety in the city - 44% drop in killed and seriously injured casualties over the past 2 years, and 30% drop in slight casualties over the past 5 years
- Improved footpaths - proportion in need of repair down from 27% in 2007/08 to only 13% in 2008/09
- Reduced number of days with temporary traffic controls or road closures

### **SAFE AND HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS**

#### Citizen Services

- Introducing a pre-paid green waste collection across the City over the year attracting 7,500 subscribers and 2,300 tonnes of waste being composted
- Better recycling rates - from 24% to just over 34% and surpassing our target of 32% for 2012 two years early.
- Cleaner streets - reducing the number of streets found dirty at the time of inspection to only 9%
- Stronger enforcement on fly-tipping - including "The House that fly-tippers built" and joint working with the Police, County Council and the Environment Agency
- Significant improvements made to the management of our tree stock including improved tree inspection regimes and liaison/communications with our communities and stakeholders

#### Community safety

- Safer Norwich Partnership achieved an overall reduction in crime in Norwich of 9% in 2008/9 against a target of 8.25%
- Norwich has been named as the second safest city in the country for household thefts
- Improved perception of antisocial behaviour – reduced from 23% in 2006-07 to 19.9% in 2008-09
- Implementation of a pilot Taxi Marshall scheme to safely dispatch people home from the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights

#### Recreation and play

- New multi-use games area, new junior toddler play area and refurbished BMX track developed at Sloughbottom Park
- Belvoir Street multi-use games area rebuilt



- Play areas have been built or completely refurbished at Ketts Cave, Gertrude Road, Wilberforce Road, Sewell Park, West End Park, Bowthorpe, Sale Road, Shorncliffe Avenue, Earlham Fourways, Jubilee Park, Bowers Avenue.
- Play facility developed for children with high dependency supervised needs, disabled open access play area completed - identified as a gap in the Play Strategy
- Completed major consultation and visioning exercise for Jenny Lind park - proposals to be reported to the executive in July to seek approval
- Successful Lottery bid c. £300k with 3 Projects in our portfolio - Play Rangers, Toy Library and a new Eco park

#### Housing Property services

- Massive improvement in outstanding gas safety inspection (this is the annual gas appliance service) figures from just under 1000 outstanding October 2007 to zero as at April 2009
- Decent Homes figure target as at March 2009 exceeded. Target was 12% non decent actual outturn 8% non decent.

#### Community and Neighbourhood Engagement

- Community engagement strategy developed, consulted on and adopted
- New Community engagement team recruited and in place
- Currently relationship building with communities and developing local profiles
- External evaluation of Neighbourhood Management showed a successful coordination role, an ability to develop multi-agency problem solving and increased community involvement

#### Regulatory Services

- Considerable improvements to health and safety work including:
  - The introduction of flexible warrants for 4 staff in conjunction with their introduction across the county
  - The completion of a serious incident investigation which resulted in a court appearance and a significant fine of £20,000
- Successful enforcement activity include:
  - Prosecution of a Norwich hotelier for breaches of health and safety legislation (serious fall on cellar stairs)
  - Conducted three major health and safety investigations involving 2 falls on stairs (one of which was a fatality)

#### Food Safety

- Extensive achievements on the "Scores on the Doors" (SOTD) scheme including:
  - Shortlisted for the MJ Awards and attended award ceremony at the Hilton Hotel in London
  - Hosted a visit from Dame Deirdre Hutton - Chair of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) - and hosted a visit by LACORS on the scheme. The scheme has now been adopted nationally by the FSA
  - Worked with BBC Inside/Out documentary series on the national debate on 3 or 5 star schemes
  - Helped neighbouring authorities introduce their own SOTDs schemes

- Double-page spread in the Evening News about the Norwich Safer Food Award going national
- Other successful initiatives include:
  - Food Safety for Childminders leaflet produced and distributed (soon to be displayed on our website)
  - Healthy Schools Norfolk initiative where we demonstrated the UV light box and correct hand washing to hundreds of children
  - Our first Alternative Enforcement Strategy mailshot (very successful with a high number of returns contributing significantly to the number of interventions carried out by the team)

### Green Spaces

- Allotment Service improvements - occupancy rate up from 97% to 99
- Volunteers from Elm Grove Lane allotment association cleared 2 unlettable allotment plots on the site. These plots are now tenanted and being worked.
- Improved neighbourhood working between green spaces, city care and neighbourhood wardens has led to an ongoing problem associated with the locking of Waterloo Park being resolved where youngsters often refuse to leave
- Considerable work on improving Mousehold Heath
  - Mousehold plan consulted on and adopted
  - 1917 volunteer work hours completed
  - leading 7 environmental education activities and school assemblies
- Programme of wildlife, history and health walks introduced for a range of community groups
- Carried out a range of biodiversity surveys (bird, butterfly, dragonfly, plant, owl and bats)
- Chapelfield Gardens Bandstand repainted after several years of neglect
- Britannia barracks changing rooms refurbished
- New public open spaces adopted at Fifers lane and Baxter Court

## OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

### Financial inclusion

- Adoption of a financial inclusion strategy and action plan for 2009-10
- Secured £150,000 from NRF and £50,000 from LEGL for activities to support residents
- Created a Financial Inclusion Manager role to develop the council's work in this area

### Transformation

- Setting up of an Older People's Commission to explore opportunities for improving the quality of life of older people in the city
- Extensive progress on improving our environmental footprint:
  - Successfully joint Local Authority Carbon Management Programme, and publish our first Environmental Strategy with specific actions
  - Held first Norwich Eco-awards
  - Achieved Level 1 of the national Climate Change targets (NI188)
  - Secured £200K external funding for environmental projects
  - External funding for a school resource box on environmental activities

- Achieved Level 2 of the national Equalities Standard, including improved working on disability and user monitoring to enable services to better meet customer needs

#### Natural Areas and biodiversity

- NI 197: 15 out of 17 County Wildlife Sites owned by Norwich City Council recognised as being in positive management
- Marston Marsh Local Nature Reserve - habitat improvements undertaken funded by external grant programme to enhance biodiversity
- Project with Anglian Water and Natural England to install a sluice to manage levels on Mile Cross Marsh to improve the habitat for wildlife and visitors

#### Cultural Services

- Portrait of a Nation/Norwich ID - a major project for cultural development in 2008 was Portrait of a Nation/Norwich ID, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund with £58,000. The project was part of the UK-wide Portrait of a Nation collaboration with Liverpool's year as Capital of Culture, HLF and the Cultural Cities Network of which Norwich is an active member.
- Cultural Cities Network - Norwich is a founder member of the Cultural Cities Network. Formed in 2003, it now comprises 17 active cities, and links them strategically but also link back to grass-roots activity in each city to work together on delivery projects such as Portrait of a Nation.

### **AIMING FOR EXCELLENCE**

#### Finance

- Secured a Level 2 "Use of Resources" score for the way the Council manages its finances
- Closed the accounts successfully with only minor technical adjustments needed

#### Customer Focus

- Changing to the new 0844 number on 1/7/08 to improve the service to our customers by ensuring that people get through quicker and get to the right person first time through use of the menu system
- Improvements and rebranding of the customer centre so that it is a more welcoming clear and pleasant place to visit, including changes to the interview rooms
- Improvements and development of the 'Do It Online' facility via the web
- Development and implementation of the new complaints, comments, and compliments process
- Continued management of the councillor enquiry process in order to ensure improvements and visibility of requests from both customer and councillors
- Implementation of "avoidable contact" review (NI14)
- Initiated the best practice work around customers flags (previously known as Potentially violent flags)
- Improved quality of service through silent listening of calls and mystery shopping that is being undertaken with other local authorities in the region.

### Democratic Services

- Successfully delivered a local by-election closely followed by a combined County/European election

### Procurement

- Electronic purchasing system fully rolled out.
- Identified efficiencies of over £500K through working with other NCC services and CityCare
- Consolidated electricity contracts and achieved £167k saving
- Implemented a new payroll contract, with a saving of £40k.
- Home Improvement Agency contract achieved saving of £30k
- New insurance contract (started Apr 2008) with a one off saving of £70k and ongoing savings of £35k.
- Introduced new pool cars (April 2008) achieved savings of £60k and reduced carbon emissions by 8 tonnes CO2.
- New mobile phone contracts introduced (started Aug 2008). 2008/9 saving of around £6k but once fully rolled out will achieve £20k saving.
- Oyster cards used for officers visiting London to reduce travel costs by 66%

### Service improvement

- A wider range of systems and software improvements to support improved and more efficient service delivery
  - Developed a single point of contact for customer enquiries about waste and recycling initiatives
  - Improved ICT and network security arrangements, including compliance with Government standards
  - Replacement of all multi-functional device printers and rationalisation of local printers now enabling close monitoring of printing patterns and trends to reduce costs and improve environmental performance
  - Implementation of collection of data for NI14 (Avoidable contact)– our approach now being adopted by other organisations
  - Improved process for handling Councillor enquires / and a new corporate process for Complaints, Compliments and Comments

### Partnership working

- A stronger and more robust approach to partnership working which has included:
  - A corporate governance framework for partnership working
  - A clearer understanding of the authority's role in supporting delivery of the countywide local area agreement
  - A more inclusive local strategic partnership (CoNP) - a self assessment exercise undertaken by CoNP partners evidenced a positive direction of travel for the partnership.

### Human Resources

- Partnership working across local authorities in Norfolk on leadership development (Norfolk LEAPP programme) which will lead to improvements in service delivery

- Developing a new induction programme for managers across all the authorities in Norfolk so that managers start working together more to provide better services.

#### **ACHIEVING UNITARY STATUS FOR THE CITY**

- Our preferred option for a 2 unitary pattern (a greater Norwich unitary and a second rural Norfolk unitary council) is under consideration by the Boundary Committee (recommendation to the Secretary of State expected on 15 July)